

I do not support an escalation of US troop levels in Iraq. President Bush cannot lead America to military victory in Iraq absent a viable political solution that puts Iraq back together and redeploys our soldiers from that of an occupying force. His statement is three years too late and several hundred thousand soldiers short. The President refuses to see that his strategy to combat terrorism has created an Islamic Shia state, with the relegation of the Sunni and the escape of Christians. Is this lopsided result really in the interests of regional peace long term? Why should our US forces the President says he wants to deploy to Baghdad and Anbar province be used to do the clean up work for the Shia-led government? The growing insurgency inside Iraq and anti-American sentiment both inside and outside Iraq will not be quelled by sending more troops. It will ripen it.

There is now only one choice: Iraqis must take responsibility for their own security as part of a political solution that works. But how can that political solution work when minorities in Iraq feel so underrepresented? This is why the international community, and Iraq's neighbors, must become engaged in diplomatic efforts.

President Bush cannot lead America to victory in Iraq absent a viable political solution that puts Iraq back together and removes our soldiers as an occupying force. The President refuses to acknowledge that his strategy to combat terrorism has created a growing insurgency and anti-American sentiment, both inside Iraq and outside it. Sending more troops at this time merely to follow the same failed policy is three years late and several hundred thousand soldiers short. There is now only one choice: Iraqis must take responsibility for their own security as part of a political solution that works.

Throughout the Muslim and Persian world, the President's policies have emboldened anti-American leaders in Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Bahrain, the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, and, now, the Horn of Africa. The Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive war, test marketed in Iraq, succeeded in deposing Saddam Hussein and determining whether or not he possessed weapons of mass destruction. It is time, therefore, for the president to declare victory and transform the operation.

As decorated CIA intelligence officer Robert Baer has written: "We are war in America and throughout the Western world, at war with an enemy with no infrastructure to attack, with no planes to shoot out of the sky, with no boats to sink to the bottom of the seas, and precious few tanks to blow up for the amusement of the viewers of CNN."

Baer contends the only way to defeat such a faceless enemy is by substantial increases in human intelligence. But that intelligence has been lacking. Even in the US Embassy in Baghdad, almost no one speaks Arabic. Dr. Edward Luttwak, a strategic affairs expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, reinforced that view this week by noting that the US general who led the operation to apprehend Osama bin Laden neither spoke Arabic, nor showed any interest in learning it, and depended on translations of intercepts to detect him.

It is too late to fill that intelligence gap so fundamental to military success.

Now, with the president's proposal to accelerate deployment of certain units, those units are going to deploy with too few personnel or with significant numbers of new personnel. This decreases unit cohesiveness and individual proficiency. Many units are facing three or more deployments-far beyond what was originally anticipated.

We also know previous troop escalations have yielded no more success than previous escalations did in Vietnam.

Last summer's escalation in troops levels has not tamped down an increasing insurgency. Indeed, all prior troop escalations have yielded increasing violence. From December 2003-April 2004, as part of a massive rotation of 250,000 troops, troop levels in Iraq were raised from 122,000 to 137,000. The increase did nothing to prevent Muqtada al-Sadr's Najaf uprising. April 2004 was the second deadliest month for American forces. Then, from November 2004 through March 2005, as part of an effort to improve counterinsurgency operations after the Fallujah offensive in November 2004-and to increase security levels before the January 2005 constitutional elections in Iraq-- U.S. forces were increased by 12,000 more troops to 150,000. There was no long-term positive impact on security.

Then, in the fall of 2005, the Bush Administration increased troop levels by 22,000, making a total of 160,000 American troops in Iraq around the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections. While the elections were not marred by major violence, there was little long-term impact on quelling rising sectarian violence and attacks on American troops.

Finally, in June 2006, the Bush Administration announced a new plan for securing Baghdad by increasing the presence of Iraqi security forces. That plan failed. So, in July the White House announced that additional American troops would be sent into Baghdad. By October, the U.S. military spokesman, General William Caldwell, acknowledged that the operation and troop increase had been a failure and "had not met our overall expectations of sustaining a reduction in the levels of violence."

The president cannot hold the ground by employing greater and greater numbers of unaccountable contracted forces and mercenaries to compensate for the lack of security and rising anti-Americanism. Our military's time-honored values of duty, honor, and country are being eviscerated by an operation that is depending more and more on hired guns to police the streets, on bounty-seeking contractors to guard important sites, and foreign nationals to carry out internal security operations in Iraq.

Some Iraqis have proposed dividing Baghdad into nine sectors and policing them with Iraqi troops, as American soldiers are redeployed as backups. That might work. But the U.S. needs a new political strategy that addresses the rising levels of global terrorism the Bush policy is yielding, and the growing anti-American sentiment that is brewing in Iraq and the Muslim world and beyond. That strategy also demands significant new human intelligence networks, not standing armies. Moreover, we need international diplomacy to engage all nations that border Iraq to seek a resolution to the strife. And we need a foreign policy that does not put the interests of oil above the value of human life.